

*The Journalist's Social Media Handbook*

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

by

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# ABSTRACT

Social media has changed how we communicate with each other over the Internet and how journalists are able to tell stories. For teenagers, the most active users of social media, their primary use for social media is to address

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their personal needs and audiences. The thing that teens don't know what to do with social media is how to tell stories on each of the platforms that pull readers into a narrative about topics in today's world. Since many

Americans today get their news from social media, it is important to teach student journalists and their advisers how social media can be used to build audiences, create a dialect and tell stories across multiple digital platforms.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## TO KIM GREEN

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you so much for agreeing to be my mentor for this thesis project. For dealing with all the trouble that I caused and for guiding me in the right direction, you have no idea how much your help has meant to me this semester.

I feel like I could never truly thank you for all that you have done for me, but thank you most of all for being there for me. Thank you for being that person that I can confide in, that person I could cry to and the person who would tell me how it is.

I also want to thank you for being such a huge inspiration and being the perfect role model for what a journalism educator should look, act and be like.

I hope that I can become HALF the journalism educator that you are and have my chance to make a huge difference in the field and on the lives of many students.

So, just in case I haven't said it enough, THANK YOU.

## TO BRIAN HAYES

You are honestly like a dad to me. You are such a cool professor to work with and I think we have such a close relationship since first meeting in my sophomore year of high school.

You were such a huge help this semester as my supervisor and I cannot thank you enough for keeping me sane through the whole process.

I also want to thank you for teaching me everything that I needed to know to make sure that my teaching is the best it can be for my students.

## TO MY PARENTS

I mean I don't know that any of this would be possible without the love and support that you have offered to me over the years.

Thank you for all that you have provided for me and for helping me to pay off college expenses. I also want to thank you for encouraging me to get out of my comfort zone and to challenge myself in my academics.



# THE PROCESS

## STEP ONE: THE IDEA

When thinking about what I wanted to do for my senior Honors thesis, I was trying to think of something that would combine both of my majors in one cohesive project. When I was thinking about it, most of the ideas that I came up with were ones that had to do with the current state of the media and what could be done to fix it. When I tried to think about how I could apply that to my education experience, I came up a little short on ideas. After some more deliberation, I thought about my experience with social media through the Journalism Workshops office at Ball State and how a lot of journalism advisers in Indiana do not allow students to use social media to its full advantages. After talking it over with my thesis adviser, Kim Green, she helped me to come up with the idea of a booklet that would be useful to both student journalists and their advisers on the best ways to use social media in a scholastic journalism environment. It was from there that I began my research.

## STEP TWO: THE RESEARCH

I started my research about social media ON social media. I looked through what current student journalists were doing, I looked at what the professionals were doing and I looked into different elements of each platform that could be used to tell stories on the digital platforms. From there, I looked through databases and other

scholarly search engines to find articles about how social media impacts students and journalists and what role it plays in the learning process. I gathered many articles that included the impact of the first amendment on social media and how social media has changed the field of journalism. From there, I looked for articles and online tools that talked about how to improve social media presences. There were times that I was looking for specific things and other times that I was just looking for anything and everything that was out there by using keywords in my searches. I read through everything that I found and I marked the information that seemed important to look back into and I started to make the outline to my project.

## STEP THREE: THE PROJECT

With all of the information that I had gathered, I set up a basic outline of my thesis noting how many pages I wanted to devote to each topic and what information I wanted to cover in each 'chapter.' I used a booklet from another journalism educator - Tom Gayda - as inspiration for how big I wanted my guide to be and what the general design might look like, but I also looked into some other designs on Pinterest that seemed appealing. Given that I was doing my student teaching during the semester that I was working on my thesis, I did

not have a lot of time to work on the project during the day, but I did take notes whenever I thought of something new that I wanted to focus on or an interesting focus that I could take. Whenever I had the time, I sat down and wrote out my thoughts in a Google Doc so that I could continue to work on it wherever and whenever I had the time. When I was writing, I thought about some of the things that I read and what they were trying to say. I thought about what student journalists needed to know what whether or not the information I was looking into was accurate. I took the information that I had read and I wrote up what I thought student journalists needed to know to be good storytellers. Once I had all of the written material, I took to InDesign and began to piece everything together for the final design. During the process, I learned how to design a book that would be both appealing to readers and include a lot of information that they could interact with every time that they look through the book. I wanted to make sure that this was something that journalism advisers and student journalists could look through and find something new that they might not have considered about social media's impact on journalism storytelling. Once everything was assembled, I sent a draft to my thesis adviser who gave me some feedback on the ideas and some other things to consider, which I included in the final project.

#### **STEP FOUR: THE FUTURE**

Now that my thesis project is complete, I am considering what the future holds for this project. I have talked with Tom Gayda, another journalism adviser, about how he published his booklet about journalism leadership and

what the cost might be for my project to become available to others in the field. My thesis adviser has also talked with me about reaching out to the Journalism Education Association about having this booklet published and sold in their bookstore so that other

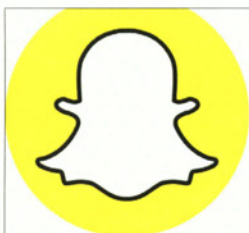
advisers across the country will have something like this at their disposal. I also have plans to attend the JEA fall convention in Dallas to talk more about my thesis so that current student journalists can start to use more social media in their current reporting.





THE JOURNALIST'S  
**SOCIAL MEDIA  
HANDBOOK**

by **ROTH LOVINS**



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# Letter from the Author

I am part of the generation that grew up just before social media sites like Myspace and Facebook blew up in the social atmosphere and now they have become an integral part of my lifestyle.

It's the first thing I look to in the morning, what I use to stay informed throughout the day and the last thing that I check before going to bed (well, that and my alarm).

With how much each of the platforms has changed since their creation, you can imagine the curiosity that I and other journalists have when considering how we can use social media to advance digital storytelling. That is exactly the motivation behind this handbook.

Given that I want to teach journalism in a high school setting and have an obsession with social media, I wanted to research the best ways that I could use the multiple platforms and how they could be used to tell stories in new and interesting ways.

I looked through peer-reviewed journals, read multiple blogs and scoured Pinterest to get all the best information for this book so that myself and any other high school teachers and students could figure out how to best use social media on their publication staffs.

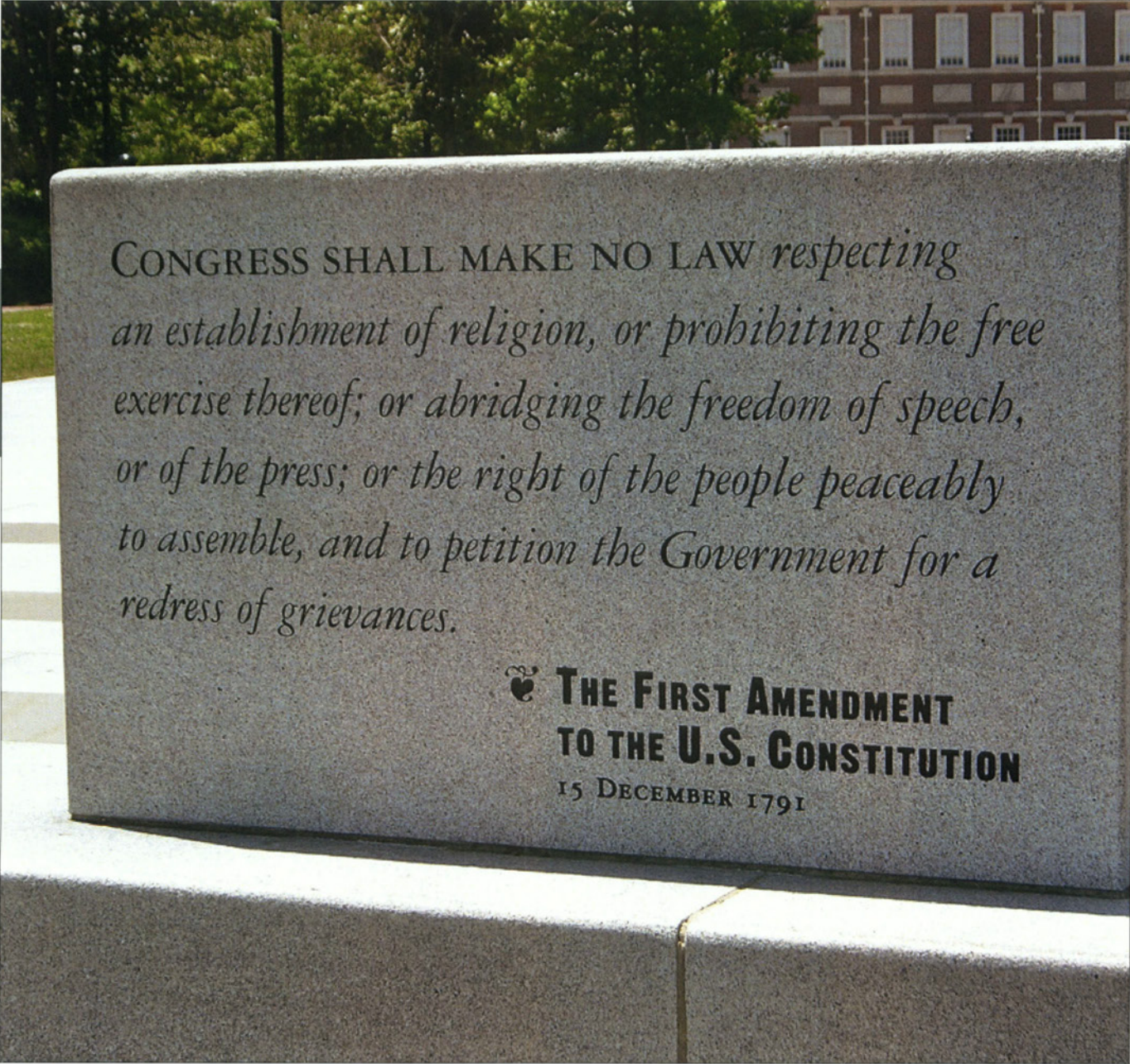
Whether you learn about a new platform, find a way to interact better with your audience or learn about developing your digital brand, I hope you find something useful in this guidebook that can help you to navigate the social media world.

And just in case you were curious, the following is my daily social media routine.

Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter. Twitter. Twitter. Instagram, Twitter. Twitter. Snapchat, Instagram. Twitter. Twitter. Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter.

**ROTH LOVINS**  
**@rothlovins**





CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW *respecting*  
*an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free*  
*exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech,*  
*or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably*  
*to assemble, and to petition the Government for a*  
*redress of grievances.*

❧ **THE FIRST AMENDMENT**  
**TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION**  
15 DECEMBER 1791





# CHAPTER 1

## Social Media Ethics

**J**ournalists have a strong code of ethics that they apply to their storytelling and the decisions that they make about content coverage. Those ethical principles also apply to social media. If you want to be able to build a good following and attract people to the content that you are publishing, you need to act professional and make good decisions when using social media. Good ethical practices are also necessary to make sure that you are included in conversations about events that impact your audience. So, similar to the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, this chapter will outline some of the basic ethical decisions that should be applied to social media.

### BE ACCURATE

#### Don't just spread information

Naturally, when we hear a piece of news, we are inclined to tell the next person we see as well as ask them what they know about the subject. However, a journalist's job is to take all information with a grain of salt and to think critically about the information that is being shared. In terms of social media, determining whether to pass along information being reported on social media sites by other news outlets or individuals, students need to be thoughtful. When we call attention to what others are saying, in the eyes of the audience we are backing up information that may or may not be accurate.

*A tablet with a First Amendment inscription in Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia.*

*Fair use photo from the Setonian*



## SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS CODE OF ETHICS

### ACT INDEPENDENTLY

The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public. JOURNALISTS SHOULD:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived. Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; do not pay for access to news. Identify content provided by outside sources, whether paid or not.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers, donors or any other special interests, and resist internal and external pressure to influence coverage.

### SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT

Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information. JOURNALISTS SHOULD:

- Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work. Verify information before releasing it.
- Remember that neither speed nor format excuses inaccuracy.
- Provide context. Take special care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing or summarizing a story.
- Gather, update and correct information throughout the life of a news story.

- Identify sources clearly. The public is entitled to as much information as possible to judge the reliability and motivations of sources.
- Diligently seek subjects of news coverage to allow them to respond to criticism or allegations of wrongdoing.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable. Give voice to the voiceless.
- Support the open and civil exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Provide access to source material when it is relevant and appropriate.
- Label advocacy and commentary.
- Never deliberately distort facts or context, including visual information.

But journalists also know that reporting about what's being posted on social media can give our readers valuable insights into the events of the day.

Before blindly sharing information that we see online, it is important to tell readers what has and hasn't been confirmed. Journalists should question claims made and find other sources which can give credit to or provide evidence that can further develop the conversation taking place. The most important question that a journalist can ask themselves before sharing something on social media is 'am I about to contribute to the spread of a rumor or am I passing on valuable and accurate information that readers need to be aware of?'

In the case of breaking news, a good idea would be to create a live update on a publication's website where readers can see a progression of information from the initial event. This is a good practice to combat the variety of rumors and other information that can come with events that intrigue your readers and gives them one location to report to if they are unsure of what they hear from peers.

### Contact and Follow Up Offline

On social media and other online networks, it is easier for a source to falsify information because they are not held accountable like they would be when talking with someone face-to-face. There have also been cases where someone falsifies their identity or creates other accounts for the purpose of spreading rumors.

Direct messaging a source online could give them a chance to explain where they received information, but there is also still the chance that they will not be honest. Therefore, it is best to contact sources in person or over the phone to get clarity of information.

### When in doubt, leave it out

If you have any suspicion that information, visuals or other posts on social media might not be reliable, it's better to err on the cautious side and not post or share the content in question. You owe it to your readers to give them THE most accurate and valuable information so that they can make decisions and are aware of events that could affect their lives.



### **BE ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT**

Ethical journalism means taking responsibility for one's work and explaining one's decisions to the public. JOURNALISTS SHOULD:

- Explain ethical choices and processes to audiences. Encourage a civil dialogue with the public about journalistic practices, coverage and news content.
- Acknowledge mistakes and correct them promptly and prominently
- Explain corrections and clarifications carefully and clearly.
- Expose unethical conduct in journalism, including within their organizations.
- Abide by the same high standards they expect of others.

### **MINIMIZE HARM**

Ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect. JOURNALISTS SHOULD:

- Balance the public's need for information against potential harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance or undue intrusiveness.
- Show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage. Use heightened sensitivity when dealing with juveniles, victims of sex crimes, and sources or subjects who are inexperienced or unable to give consent. Consider cultural differences in approach and treatment.

- Recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast.
- Realize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than public figures and others who seek power, influence or attention. Weigh the consequences of publishing or broadcasting personal information.
- Balance a suspect's right to a fair trial with the public's right to know. Consider the implications of identifying criminal suspects before they face legal charges.

### **BE HONEST AND IMPARTIAL**

Just like when interviewing a source, you wouldn't falsely identify yourself to sources or consider everything to be off the record. Online journalists have to tell sources that they are being questioned for a certain publication and that information shared will likely be published for others to read.

Journalists should also remember that they will be held accountable for the information that is published and that sources should be held accountable for the information that they provide.

In the recent election, there has been a lot of coverage about fake news that is written just to create headlines and to get clicks to one outlet over another. Journalists have a responsibility to look for the truth in their reporting and hold others

accountable when they think that the truth is not being presented.

The other trend that came out of the election and the following administration was the use of alternative facts. People of power have been using and talking about facts that turn things in their favor and show that they should be listened to. Journalists, however, have been and should continue to, give readers all of the information to show every side to the story and allow readers to make informed decisions on their own.

### **GIVE ATTRIBUTION TO SOURCES**

Give credit where the credit is due. You wouldn't want someone to try and pass off something that you did on their own, so don't do it on your social media feed. When quoting on

social media, try and tag the person if possible so that others can see what else that person has posted and got an idea of their character.

Should you want to borrow a photo or other content from someone on social media, it is important to ask them for permission to repost it on your account instead of just taking it and giving the credit. If asked, the source may actually have different content that they would rather share or they may have gotten it from somewhere else themselves.

The main idea is that attributing where your content comes from assures that you might not be put in the hot seat for misinforming readers. However, if you later find out that you DID share something that was not accurate, then it is necessary to tell readers that and apologize.







*A flowchart with social media platform logos incorporated.*

*Fair use photo from Udemy*

# CHAPTER 2

## Creating a Brand

**W**hen thinking about how you want to present yourself or your publications online, you need to consider what your mission is. Each different social media outlet has a different purpose and can advance storytelling in a unique and meaningful way and that is something a staff or individual needs to consider when using social media platforms. This chapter will focus on how to come up with a meaningful goal plan or mission statement that can be applied to all social media platforms. There will also be some mention of the things that will

help when thinking about how you want to represent your publication to your audience and ways that you can create a consistent voice and personality online.

### **SET A GOAL**

The first step in thinking of a goal for your social media presence is to consider what you want to achieve. Do you want to create a better conversation with your readers and followers? Do you want to reach a certain milestone of followers on certain social accounts? Are you looking to increase traffic from social media to another site?



## SMART Model

### **SPECIFIC**

Your goals should be clear, simple and defined.

### **MEASURABLE**

Attach a metric to your goal so you can measure your progress. For example, it could be reach, new website visitors or leads.

### **ACHIEVABLE**

Will you actually be able to achieve this goal? Make sure you're being reasonable with your expectations.

### **REALISTIC**

You should have the resources and desire to achieve your goals. For instance, it's possible to double your social media traffic within 60 days. But do you have the time, resources or drive it will take to meet that goal?

### **TIME SENSITIVE**

Your social media goals should have a time frame. The trick here is setting a timetable that's reachable, but not so far out that there is no pressure to achieve it. Setting a time frame of 12 months to increase your social media reach by 10% is too easy. A good starting point for most social media goals is around 3-6 months.

No matter what that goal is that you are trying to achieve with your social media presence, you need to have some sort of a game plan that you can measure and help you to reach those goals. The best way to do that would be to follow the SMART approach (see sidebar) to make sure that you give yourself the proper assessment for what you want to achieve.

Once you have a goal in mind, the next thing to do would be to create a mission statement for how your social media presence should be exemplified. Your social media mission statement will drive your future actions, so make sure you put some thought into it. This statement will make it clear exactly what you plan to use your social media presence for and should reflect your identity. Keep your audience in mind when you are thinking of this mission.

For journalists, the main mission that should be involved in their social media presence is storytelling. Journalists should be using social media sites to create and advance narratives, spark conversations about topics that are important in today's world and create a community of readers that continue to engage with the content.

## **BUILD AND KEEP AN AUDIENCE**

When trying to build an audience, the most important thing to remember is to keep a consistent voice. To get your audience to continue to read what you are posting you need to make sure that the messages that you are posting are

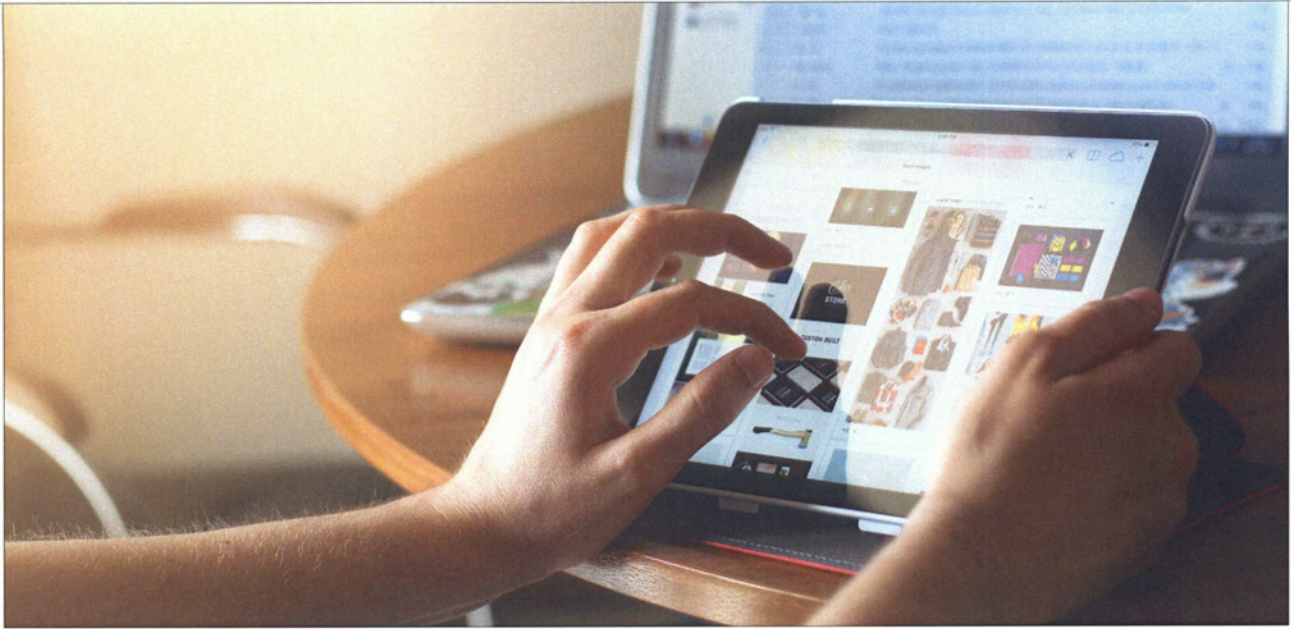
helping you to meet your purpose while also catching the interest of new readers that see shared posts.

The best way to build an audience is to share posts that spark a conversation. You will be more likely to get return users if you are asking questions and posting about things they care about. The best way to do this would be to include a person's face or something else that will stand out when users are scrolling through the posts on their newsfeed.

Another good way to build an audience is by making sure that your staff members and affiliates are sharing posts that they create, are featured in or need some more attention online. Once other users see that their friends are sharing posts that they think are cool or that they have worked on, they are going to be more likely to tune back and see what new information they come across.

Once you HAVE the audience, it might be difficult to keep them on your platform unless there is something of use to them that keeps them checking back. Are you posting constant updates that they might miss out on if they don't follow you? Do you live-tweet sporting events and give that information to people that are unable to attend the game? Is your content engaging and worth sticking around for? Unless you can safely say 'yes' to one of these questions, the odds are that you might not be able to keep a consistent audience. The other thing to realize is that if you are a high school publication, odds are that once people graduate, you may lose a large portion of your audience.





Fair use photo from Pexels

### **ALLOW CITIZEN JOURNALISM**

Another good way to interact with users on social media would be to include some of the things that they create within the content that you are pushing. Whether they helped to cover some breaking news or if they took a good photo within the school, it is always a good idea to get users involved in what you are posting. By sharing posts that readers have made, you are creating a better relationship with that user, while also giving them some more attention for their great content (and honestly, who wouldn't love that kind of attention).

The one caution to keep in mind with citizen journalism, however, is that research and fact checking are a must for posts that can have an impact on event reporting. Reporters should use extreme caution and question sources that share

information or images from events that have not been fully investigated.

### **CONVERSE IN THE COMMENTS**

A big part of keeping up a conversation with your audience is making sure that the conversation is worth having and is moving in any kind of direction. As many people know, the Internet is filled with people that would rather go around and spread hate rather than positively contribute to the conversation's progression. As a publication or as an individual, you need to decide what you are going to do about those comments that should not be included in the conversation. Do you disable comments on your social media so that there is no chance of negative comments? Do you monitor comments and delete ones that do not contribute to the conversation? Whatever you decide,

you need to make sure that you keep with your decision to go with your consistent online voice.

### **ASSESS WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T**

Part of your goal and mission should involve some way to make sure that you can measure the success of your online presence. To do this, it would be worth your time to look into the analytics of both your social media presence and traffic your website gets from social media platform. Most social media platforms offer in-house analytics that allow you to see how many people interact with posts and trends in overall following. However, it would also be useful to include some Google Analytics on your website to see where all of your traffic comes from and how long users spend on each page.







# CHAPTER 3

## Social Media Platforms

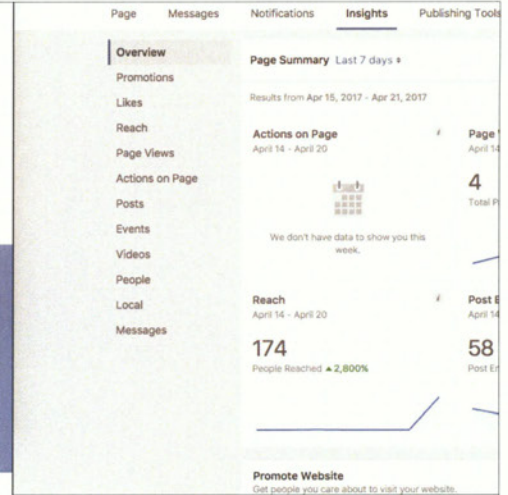
When it comes to storytelling on social media, there are a few different platforms that can be utilized. Each of the platforms has their own benefits and drawbacks and this chapter will focus on everything you need to know about each platform. With each social media site, there are lists of some of the key features that will help with interacting with an audience and telling a story on a digital platform. Also included is

a timetable of when the best time to post on that medium might be. When considering how to apply this information to your publication, you should also consider the environment and the audience that you are trying to appeal to. For instance, students now are on Twitter and Snapchat more than they are on Facebook. If you are a student journalist, then you would be an expert on what your audience is like because it is composed of yourself and your peers.

*Some of the social media applications that are available on iOS.*

*Fair use photo from Kajsa Hartig*





# Facebook

Facebook is THE number one social media among all age groups and is still the largest social media platform for teenagers. For publications and other groups, Facebook is used as mostly a promotional tool for everything that the group does. Journalists however, need to keep in mind that this platform is also a tool that can be used to tell stories in another format and reach a greater audience and keep up a conversation with the people that the content is for.

## IMAGES

While it is not primarily a photo platform, much of the functions of Facebook rely on photos that will engage the audience and ensure that content is read by the audience.

### Posting with Photos

Whatever you are posting on Facebook, it is going to be received much better if there is a photo that is attached to it. If you only post words as a part of an update, then it might not stand out in the long list of profiles that a user might see when they are scrolling through their newsfeed. But, sometimes, updates and other small announcements might not work with a photo, so it is something that individuals need to consider when posting.

Another thing to consider is that WHEN a photo is attached to a post, people interact best with a photo of a person that they can attach to or something that will cause a reaction or emotion like a photo of food or dogs.

### Recognizable profile photo

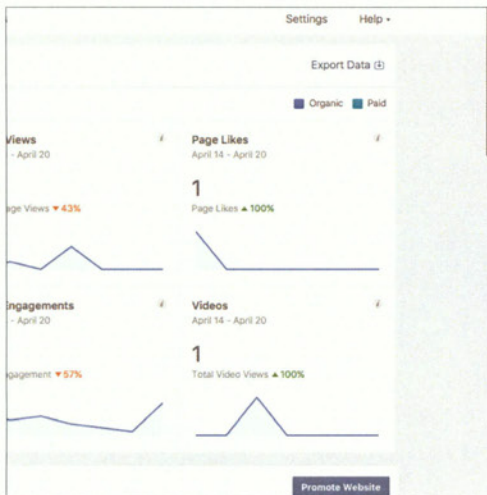
Something else that users need

to consider when using Facebook is how recognizable their profile image is. Users need to be able to identify the profile picture easily even at a smaller size like on their phone screen. Something that works best for this is a logo or some other kind of illustration that doesn't require close inspection to determine what the photo is.

### Changing and engaging cover photo

Along with a recognizable profile photo, it is also important to have a changing and engaging cover photo. Organizations like publications can stand to change out their cover photo every few weeks to show another aspect of their coverage and to keep their online audience engaged with their profile.

Another interesting thing to try with a cover photo is having it



integrate with the profile photo so that the whole profile seems like one cohesive unit.

### HAVE A CONVERSATION

Because Facebook is used by so many people, it is much more likely that conversations will spark and continue out on this platform. A journalist can use this platform to help look for sources to a story as well as receive input on a topic that is currently being covered.

### Questioning

One way to interact with your audience on Facebook is to ask them a question. Whether you post a question by itself or you use the survey option when posting, both are good ways to get feedback from those you are creating the content for.

This is also a good way to look for people that have interesting answers

or stories that might advance the storytelling that a journalist has already done or might do.

### Live

One of the newer features that Facebook has added is the ability to live stream videos of events. Both individuals and pages can live stream at an event and the video will be saved as an entry on the profile for later reference. This is more useful than similar versions on Instagram and Snapchat because those videos are gone after a set amount of time.

### LOOK INTO WHAT WORKS

All Facebook Pages come with an Insight tab that includes graphs that show trends in likes, post interactions and other summaries that will help in determining the things that are working with your Facebook audience.

## Create Great Posts

If you want to create posts that will stand out every time, here are a few tips that will make sure your post is top notch.

### TELL STORIES

People are drawn to posts that begin a narrative or have a face to them, so the more of a story you can tell, the better.

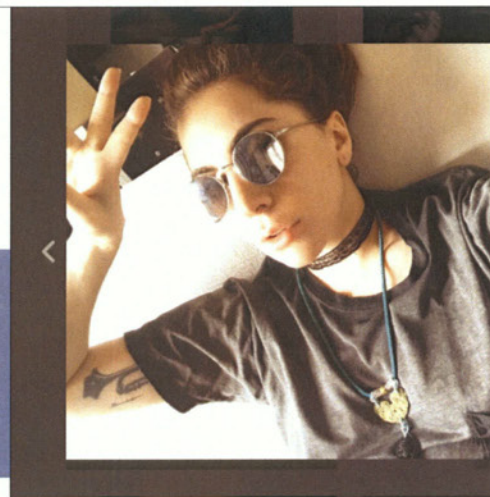
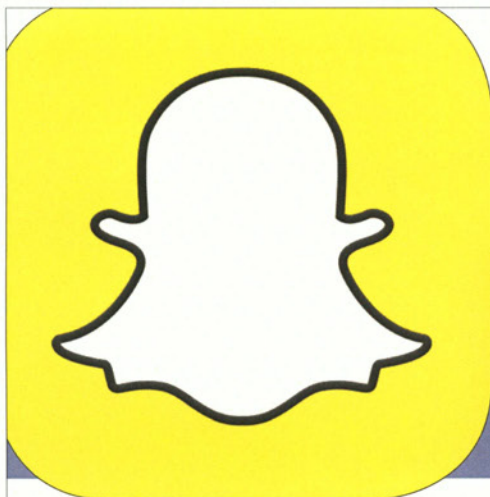
### USE QUOTES

If you include a quote in your post and a link to where they can read more about it, people are going to be inclined to click and read more about the context.

### ASK QUESTIONS

Getting your audience to think about a topic is sure to intrigue them and get them to click on your link as well as share it with friends to get their opinion.





# Snapchat

## STORY

One of the main features of Snapchat is that users can share photos and videos with other users individually or in their story for all followers to see. For most publications and other organizations, Snapchat stories are a good way to give updates or to do live coverage of events that will stay up on the story for 24 hours. The only drawback to the platform though is that each post to the story can only be 10 seconds long at the max, but multiple snaps can be attached together to make one long story. Here are a few other things that can be done to help get the most out of Snapchat stories.

### Keep it Short and Engaging

Many people are only going to see the first two seconds when they tap through the stories that they follow on Snapchat. If people see that your snapstory will require

multiple screen taps to get through the story, they are going to leave the story or unfollow your account if it is a repeat offense.

On a similar note, if you can't keep people engaged in the first second, they are just going to click through the rest of your story unless they see something of interest to them.

On a similar note, it is also a good idea to engage with your audience by talking directly with them when they ask a question or leave a comment.

## FILTERS

The other cool feature that Snapchat offers is the use of filters to make photos more visually appealing. The normal filters that are offered include the time, altitude and traveling speed that people can place over their photo, but there are more

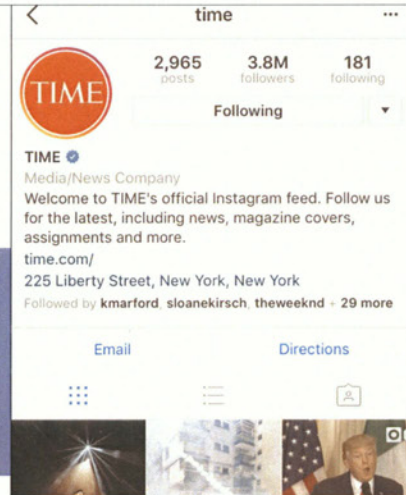
options to filters that can engage an audience.

### Geofilters

Possibly Snapchat's biggest appeal is the use of geographic position for interactive filters for events and location. Many people have already created geofilters for their hometowns, schools and communities that individuals can include on their photos to share with their personal followers.

Along with the geofilters that already exist, Snapchat offers companies and event coordinators to create their own filters that can be put in place during a set amount of time for participants to interact with and include on their stories. This can also be used for contests and content creation if individuals take screenshots of their photos and share it with the organization that created the filter.





# Instagram

## CAPTIONS

Because you will be using Instagram as a storytelling device for your publication, it is necessary to include captions for all of the posts that you upload to the platform. It's a good practice for photojournalism to write a caption that tells what is happening in the photo and how it relates to a story.

Captions should also include some tags to individual accounts and hashtags so that users can find your content through a search. Some photos might also work well if individuals are tagged on the photo as well.

## STREAM LIVE AND ON YOUR STORY

Instagram offers the ability to live stream an event like Facebook but is only available at the time that it is streamed and is not saved anywhere else.

Another thing that Instagram does - similar to Snapchat's user story - is that it offers an interface for users to share a photo that is accessible for 24 hours with filters and stickers that can be added to make the photo more visually appealing.

## PHOTO SIZE AND QUALITY

One of the recent changes that Instagram has made to the way their newsfeed looks is changing the shape that photos can be. It is now possible for photos to be posted at their original size to allow for better photo composition qualities and without having to constrain to the original square photo format.

Another thing to keep in mind is the resolution quality of photos that are uploaded. Instagram also now allows users to zoom into a photo, so higher resolution photos are ideal.

## PHOTO ALBUM

A new feature that Instagram has included is the ability to post more than one photo at a time in an album that can be swiped through. This feature works best to showcase a variety of photos from one event or to tease a photo gallery that may contain more online or in a print publication.

## BOOMERANG

Boomerang is an application form Instagram that creates a gif of about three seconds that plays forward and back multiple times. The feature comes included on the Instagram stories, but is required as an application in order to post boomerangs on a profile. Boomerang's work best when they show a repetitive task or show seamless movement that doesn't look out of the ordinary to users that interact with it.









Fair use photo from the Verge

On a similar note, it is also a good idea to engage with your audience by talking directly with them when they ask a question or leave a comment.

### TWITTER POLLS

One of Twitter's best features is the ability to poll your followers. When creating a tweet, there is an option to create a poll with up to four answers and an option for the amount of time that the poll is open. From there, your followers can vote once per account and they can share it with their followers for more engagement.

One way to use polls is by giving your followers a say in the content that you are publishing. The poll could allow your audience to choose their favorite cover design or a favorite feature story from a list of predetermined stories. Polls allow the audience input on what content is published and lets them know the publication is focused on them.

The other thing that Twitter polls can do is ask for the audience's input on stories that will be covered in the next issue or events that are happening in the world. After voting, it is a good idea to publish the results somewhere that your audience can see how their contribution fits into the content of your publication.

### GIF

Sometimes you can't find a good photo to go with the tweet that you are about to send out, or you want your tweet to stand out to users while they are scrolling through their newsfeed. One way that you can help with this is by inserting gifs into your tweets with Giphy's twitter insert. When posting a tweet, you can find a gif for just about any phrase that you can think of. By including a gif in your tweet, you are more likely to get engagement from users in the form of likes or retweets.

## Twitter Tools

### TWEETDECK

TweetDeck is an application that can be installed on both iOS and MacOS to help you navigate Twitter better. The application allows you to create multiple columns with different information so that you can track different accounts or even different aspects of your account. The other good thing about TweetDeck is that you can schedule tweets through the application so that they are posted at certain times.

### PERISCOPE

Periscope is Twitter's version of livestreaming. The application allows you to link the livestream to your account so that followers can see the video as they are scrolling through their newsfeed.



# Hashtags

I like to think that there is no real number that can say how many hashtags should be on a post. A lot of sources will say that it is best to use more hashtags on Instagram because that is how the description of the photo can be found by other users. However, I think that the more hashtags there are on a post, the more desperate you seem to your followers. Using too many hashtags gives off a vibe of trying too hard to get likes on a photo and that isn't something that you want to convey to your followers or prospective followers. But, if you notice that multiple hashtags is something that members of your following are doing, that might be something that you want to pursue. The main idea is to get familiar with how your specific audience uses hashtags on their profiles. From there, you should be able to participate in the conversation accordingly.

Here are some things to keep in mind when using hashtags in your posts.

## **CAREFULLY CRAFT YOUR HASHTAGS**

When using a phrase as a hashtag, it is better to capitalize each word in the hashtag so that followers can read what it is without difficulty. Also, make sure not to include punctuation in your hashtag or you run the risk of breaking your hashtag into a smaller, often meaningless, phrase.

## **KEEP THEM SHORT AND MEMORABLE**

Make sure that your hashtag is something catchy or at least short enough for someone to remember when composing their own post.

## **DOUBLE CHECK**

Before posting something with a hashtag in it, it would be wise to check the status of that hashtag as well as other posts that are grouped with it to see if your use is appropriate.

## **Timing your posts**

Many people have speculated the best time to post on each social media platform to get the best engagement with your audience. According to Fast Company, these are the ideal times to post on each of the following social media sites. However, these times are ideal for social media posts for a general audience, so when your publication creates a social media game plan, you need to consider what would be the best posting times for YOUR audience.

### **FACEBOOK**

Posts that go up anytime between 1 and 4PM are ideal because those are the times that people at work have some downtime after lunch. The peak time is around 3PM on Wednesdays.

### **SNAPCHAT**

Since posts to snapstories stay up for 24 hours, there is no ideal time to post, but most people are on the app between the hours of 10PM and 1AM.

### **INSTAGRAM**

Instagram posts tend to do better when they go up at times when people have more time to interact with the content. In this case, lunchtime (11AM-1PM) and after work (7-9PM) are the best times to post.

### **TWITTER**

Posts do better when they go up Mondays through Thursdays from 1 to 3PM. The peak time is Monday-Thursday from 9AM to 3PM.

# Social Media Tools



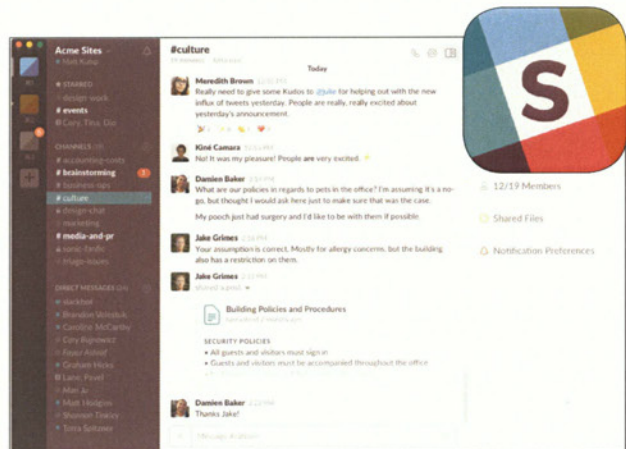
## TRELLO

Trello is an organizational website where users can put tasks in a list and attach files to create one storage place for any materials.



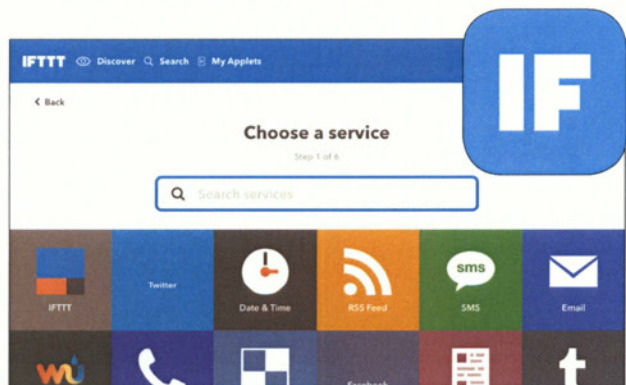
## GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Google Analytics allows you to track the number of visits your website gets. When you sign up, Google will give you a code that you have to embed in your website and then you can begin to analyze the traffic that goes to your site.



## SLACK

Slack is a team communication app. With it, you can create different groups to discuss different tasks. The app also has an integration with Trello.



## IFTTT

If this, then that (IFTTT) is an automated website and application. When you log on, you set up parameters for what task you want completed whenever something happens.



## Resources

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